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ABSTRACT

The prospect of resolving a library's space and utilization problems through expansion and renovation carries with it the question of how to maintain operations during construction. Few libraries, especially those in the academic world, can afford to close their doors for very long, even though the prospect of maintaining ongoing operations amid an atmosphere of noise and dust is daunting. This dilemma was faced by two academic libraries in the Northeast: Lyndon State College in Vermont and Skidmore College in New York. Both colleges chose the course of moving library operations completely out of the building undergoing renovation and expansion. Both also considered options such as off-campus storage and segmenting collections to fit in smaller on-campus spaces. There are many factors to take into account when moving a library to temporary quarters--finding adequate space, expense planning, moving two times, personnel stress, and the effect on patrons. Compared to the alternatives--extended construction period, noise, dust, moving materials from place to place--moving out can be a positive decision. (Author/SWC)

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Planning and Strategy for Setting Up and Operating Academic Libraries in Temporary Quarters: Experiences of Two Northeast Colleges

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The prospect of resolving a library's space and utilization problems through expansion and renovation carries with it a difficult question: How can operations be maintained during construction? Few libraries, especially those in the academic world, can afford to close their doors for very long. Yet the prospect of maintaining ongoing operations amid an atmosphere of noise and dust is daunting.

This dilemma was faced by two academic libraries in the Northeast: Lyndon State College in Vermont and Skidmore College in New York. Both colleges chose the course of moving library operations completely out of the building undergoing renovation and expansion. Both also considered options such as off-campus storage and segmenting collections to fit in smaller on-campus spaces.

THE LYNDON EXPERIENCE

Lyndon State College is a 1,200-student, 4-year public college located in the northeastern corner of Vermont. The Samuel Read Hall Library has a collection of about 100,000 volumes and subscribes to about 500 journals.

The Samuel Read Hall Library spent 1994/95 to 1995/96 temporarily located in a college gymnasium while two floors were added to its two-story library building. Planning is intensive for a move such as this, especially when attempting to fit close to 80 percent of a 100,000 book collection; bound and microform periodicals, media equipment; special collections and technical and public services work areas that at one time filled a 21,000 square foot library, into a 6,560 square foot gym. The gym was selected as the library site because it was the only option keeping the collection and staff work areas in one place while allowing patrons access to the collection.

The first step in the planning process was to create a preliminary stack layout for the gym using a computer-aided design program. Next, library staff carefully measured every linear inch of the collection and all work and public areas to determine

minimum space needed for each function, such as circulating books, government documents, etc. Then the maximum shelf space allowable in the gymnasium was calculated to determine the total linear shelf space available. Once that was determined, the linear shelf space available in the gym was subtracted from the total linear shelf space in the library to determine how many books (in shelf space) would have to be stored during the construction period.

To compensate for reduced space, the width of the aisles between stacks was cut to two feet. Bottom shelves of stacks were utilized saving the top shelves for expansion and oversized books. To avoid potential disaster, stacks along the wall were anchored to the wall while the nine runs of double stacks were secured to each other with steel rods bolted to the tops. Masonite was cut to fit under the stacks to protect the wood gymnasium floor from the weight. Engineers assured College officials there would be no lasting damage to the floor. Other shelving, along with file cabinets, computer workstations, even the shelflist cabinet, were used to form walls for offices and work areas.

Restricted-access areas were needed for media, unbound periodicals and archives. Fortunately, there was a storage room in the gym large enough for the media collection as well as a refrigerator, microwave and coffee pot. Temporary walls with a locking door were built within the gym to house unbound periodicals and archival material.

In order for the plan to work, about 20 percent of the collection had to be put in storage during the construction year. Selection of materials for storage was based on circulation statistics. Changing availability status of materials on the online catalog was taken care of by the systems administrator by changing whole call number groups when the materials were cataloged in consecutive call numbers.

Most of the stored materials had to be boxed. The method recommended by the mover was to pack them tightly, standing on end, filling the remainder of the boxes

with filler. The mover, who supplied special storage boxes, also recommended stacking the boxes no more than four high. The boxed materials and library furniture were stored in trailers and a large storage room on campus.

Another planning nightmare was the of lack phone/data and power lines in the gym for terminals, computers, printers and other equipment. The campus network had not been extended to the sports complex so additional power lines and a network hub were needed. To correct the problem, a contractor was hired to install conduit on the gym ceiling to areas corresponding with our floor plan. Power and data lines were threaded through the conduit and hung down to reference, circulation, ILL, tech services and office areas. Installing the lines and hub were considered positive expenses because the College planned to use the gym for registration in the future.

PUBLIC SERVICES

The major problem with the public services areas was the lack of comfortable seating and study space. There was seating for only about 15 students, down from about 120 seats in the old library. Study areas were set up in other parts of the college, but students said those areas are not as comfortable or convenient as the library was in regards to ready access to materials and information sources.

The reference desk was set up near the circulation desk so the reference librarian could help with circulation if needed. It also was set up close to the online terminals, CD-ROM stations, copy machines and the microform cabinets so the reference librarian could easily get to students who needed help. It was found that faster service was very important in a smaller space to keep traffic flowing smoothly.

Since about 20 percent of the collection was in storage, the Interlibrary Department prepared for an increase in requests, which never occurred. The expected increase may have been offset due to the acquisition of a full-text database.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC INSTRUCTION

Bibliographic instruction was a challenge. There were two classrooms used for library instruction in the old library and there was no room in the gym to set up a temporary classroom. The solution was for the instruction librarian to go to the students. Fortunately most classrooms in the college have access to the network. The instruction librarian used a network-ready laptop computer and a portable overhead LCD projector for in-class online catalog and other database demonstrations.

Due to the conditions, the library suspended providing tours and instruction to groups not affiliated with the college during the construction year. Letters were sent to all area schools advising them of the change. All schools understood and accepted the policy.

SKIDMORE'S EXPERIENCE

Opened in 1966, Scribner Library was the centerpiece of a new campus. By the early 1990's, it lacked floor space for growing collections, adequate study space and the power/cabling necessary to support changing technology. Expansion options were limited because of the building's location within the center of campus and its strongly symmetrical proportions. The finished design by the architectural firm, Shepley, Bulfinch, Richardson and Abbott, called for expansion on opposite sides and a complete renovation of the original building. It was clear that remaining within the building during the expansion/renovation project would be impossible.

The College considered a variety of options for temporary homes for the collections and services including off-site storage and dispersing library operations around campus, but the concurrent construction of an addition to the Sports and Recreation Center presented the most intriguing possibility. The facility offered

adequate floor space in the form of a gymnasium and a location frequented by students, though admittedly one not in the center of campus. After some serious hand-wringing, the College decided to pre-empt the use of the addition for a year and the library staff began planning the task of shoehorning library operations temporarily into a site approximately half the square footage of the already-overcrowded Scribner Library.

PLANNING AND OPERATIONALIZING

In order to allay concerns of the College community about the temporary space, the College Librarian and Associate Librarian met with academic departments, student groups and staff to educate them about the expansion plans and the move and to give them an opportunity to express their anxieties. The sessions were not only cathartic, but gave rise to some wonderful ideas about how the Library could ease the inconveniences created by the move. Many of these ideas such as a pick-up/drop-off point on campus; the ability to request materials via the OPAC; journal circulation and open reserves were eventually implemented.

Planning was difficult because the sports facility was still in the final stages of construction. In the final design, the library takes up 25,000 square feet. The only spaces within the facility suitable for public access were designated for open reserves and reference (about 5000 square feet). The reference collection, computer workstations and reference desk with seating for about 40 students is in one upper level room while the Reserve Reading Room, housing circulation, microfilm/reader printers, A-V equipment, closed and open reserves, and selected current journals and newspapers is in another. A third room accommodates technical services, ILL and most of the staff offices. On the lower level, a space which will eventually be locker rooms, houses a combination of rare books, archives and offices for government documents. The rare books had to be separated by a dry wall partition to allow for the installation of a separate HVAC system. Across the hall is the periodicals room containing both

current and bound periodicals on compact shelving. The circulating collection, government documents, maps, videos, records and less-used parts of the reference collection are housed in the gymnasium, also on this level. Additional staff offices are located in the periodicals room and the gymnasium. Unfortunately, while nicely sized, the gymnasium floor area was too small for the nearly 400,000 volumes in the collection. To compensate, stack aisles were reduced to 21 inches and were closed to the public. A future storage room at the far end of the gymnasium houses a staff lounge and slide production equipment. However, because of its location and less than comfortable ambiance, it has been little used for the former function, but it serves admirably well for the latter.

Planning for the displacement of library operations came together at the end of the 1994 spring term. As students completed final exams, National Library Relocations began moving library materials. Within four-weeks the Library was completely evacuated and construction was well underway. It took several weeks longer for staff to be settled and working again. One complicating issue was that library computers were all switched from asynchronous communication to networked based communication to coincide with the move. Ethernet boards and software needed to be installed in each computer and the staff needed to learn new communications software and protocols.

A potentially disastrous situation developed when the College learned that the live load design on the second level floor was not 150 lbs/sq/ft, but rather 120 lbs/sq/ft. The library staff was ordered immediately to remove all of the book stacks from the upper level. Following a flurry of engineering activity which included peering into closed spaces and contemplating a web of cracks in the floors, a plan was devised wherein five shelves of books per section were allowed while the rest were sent to closed stacks.

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Other operational changes included nearly doubling the number of student assistants to cover retrieving material and man the pick-up/drop-off point. An evening circulation supervisor was hired to manage student workers. While library hours were cut back, reference hours were extended to cover times in the early morning and dinner hours.

In anticipation of heavy demands from faculty and students, the Library set up a remote book drop-off/pick-up point in the College Center. This satellite circulation point also includes a photocopy machine and reserve readings. The use of this point has been steady and growing. The number of checkouts at the Center accounts for about 9% of the total for October and 21% for November.

PUBLIC SERVICES

Two solutions were devised to enhance public services. The first was to seek space for students to study and access online library resources; the second was to make those resources network accessible. For study space, three sites were located in dormitories. The library provided dictionaries, thesauri and last year's encyclopedias and the computing center provided hardware and network connections. In addition, classrooms were made available for study spaces until 2 a.m.

Working with the computer center staff, plans were developed for an integrated information environment in which remote, OPAC-based and CD-based services would be available through the campus network. Though the promised software to bring this all together has yet to materialize, the library actively encourages remote access to FirstSearch and Lexis/Nexis through its instructional program and guides.

Faculty, student groups and the Dean of Students all expressed a strong desire for the library to provide instruction on how to use the temporary library. The existing library instruction program served as the linchpin for instructional efforts, though emphasis was placed upon resources and services which students could access

remotely. The library also distributed two survival guides to the temporary library - one for faculty and one for students. About half the freshman class attended an orientation lecture which included a video "guided tour" produced by the Library and Media Services.

In part to diminish faculty concerns about the emphasis on the electronic library, a two-week faculty seminar on information resources was implemented. This successful workshop covered traditional bibliographic sources and introduced attendees to non-bibliographic information sources information available over the Internet. The library also reserved a computer cluster two hours per week and staffed it with a librarian to assist students with their online research.

CHANGES IN USAGE

The library anticipated changes in usage patterns going from an open to a closed stack environment. We expected circulation to decrease even though journals could be checked out, and this has proven to be the case. First time checkouts for the period September 1 through October 31, 1993 were 15,937. For the same period in 1994, first time checkouts were only 9,819 - down almost 40%. Slightly over 5% of the checkouts were journals. We also have seen interlibrary loans fall off by 40%.

What was unexpected was the increase in reference traffic. While there is no concrete statistical evidence, there is the strong impression on the part of reference staff that the level of demand at the reference desk is significantly higher than in the past. Why? In the old library the reference desk faced away from the computer workstations and away from the collection. Now we face the reference area and are only a few feet away from the reference stacks and workstations. Students are uncertain about the policies and procedures for requesting materials from the stacks and there

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are frequent questions concerning how to access various computer resources. These types of questions provide an easy entree to the reference desk and it seems likely that once students make their first contact with the reference librarian they continue to seek out his/her assistance.

We offered faculty an opportunity to place materials on open reserve shelves, thereby providing their students a semblence of browsing course related materials. Other faculty have made adjustments to their syllabi such as not including research papers or changing assignments to lessen the need for library materials. As one faculty member remarked, "If you can teach your courses just as you always did, then clearly you don't need a library."

The most serious complaint from students has centered on the lack of seating. But as time progressed there were fewer complaints and seats in the library have yet to be filled. Accustomed to using the library as a convenient place to study and socialize, students were taken aback by the spartan accommodations. It seems that they are coming to the library only when they need its resources, and they have gone elsewhere to study and socialize.

CONCLUSION

There are many factors to take into account when moving a library to temporary quarters - finding adequate space, expense planning, moving two times, personnel stress and most importantly, the effect on patrons. But compared to the alternatives; extended construction period, noise, dust, moving materials from place to place, moving out can be a positive decision. And, here at our libraries, students are learning that sports facilities can be used to exercise both the body and the intellect.